

# **Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail**

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Since the latter years of the Cold War, strong democratic revolutionary movements seeking the overthrow of authoritarian regimes have arisen in many countries. Such movements have succeeded in some countries, including the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1988), the countries of Eastern Europe (1989), Russia (1991), and Serbia (2000). On the other hand, strong democratic movements which rose up in some other countries were crushed before they could take power in China (1989), Burma/Myanmar (1990), and Algeria (1992).

Strong movements seeking the ouster of incumbent authoritarian regimes and their replacement by democratic government rose up in each of these cases. What, then, accounts for the success of democratic revolution in some of these cases and its failure in others? This paper will examine this question first through an examination of some of the theoretical literature on revolution, and then through a comparison of three cases of successful democratic revolution (the Philippines, Russia, and Serbia) with three cases of failed democratic revolution (China, Burma/Myanmar, and Algeria).

Certain theorists, including Crane Brinton and Timothy Wickham-Crowley, have argued that the key factor in deciding whether or not non-democratic revolution succeeds or fails is the role of the armed forces. If the armed forces protect the *ancien regime*, then the revolutionary opposition is unable to seize power. If, however, the armed forces do not protect the *ancien regime*, then the revolutionaries usually do come to power. It will be argued here that just as in attempts at non-democratic revolution, the role played by the military is also the key factor in determining the outcome of democratic revolution. When the military is willing to use force to protect the *ancien regime*, democratic revolutionaries cannot prevail. It is only the refusal of the armed forces to do this that allows democratic revolutionaries to succeed.

What, though, determines whether the armed forces of an authoritarian regime will use force to suppress a democratic revolutionary movement or not? Through a comparison of the cases mentioned above, I will argue here that the decision by the armed forces not to protect an authoritarian regime is not the result of a democratic conversion on the part of the military as a whole, but instead results from an overwhelming desire to prevent conflict within the military. Thus, if even a small number of key commanders defect to the democratic opposition, this can neutralize the armed forces as a whole even though most military leaders may be wary of, or even hostile to, democratization. But if these key defections to the democratic opposition do

not occur and the military remains unified, it is able to crush the democratic revolutionaries easily.

### **Revolution: The Role of the Military**

The literature on why revolution occurs is both vast and deep. No attempt to summarize this literature will be made here. For purposes of this study, it suffices to observe that many attempts at revolution have been made, and that some of these have succeeded while most have failed. Differing theories have also been advanced about why this is the case (Kowalewski 1991; Foran 1997). Several scholars, though, have noted the key role played by the military forces charged with defending the existing regime in determining the outcome of attempts at revolution. In his classic study, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Crane Brinton stated that “no government has ever fallen before attackers until it has lost control over its armed forces or lost the ability to use them effectively” (Brinton 1965, 89). Brinton also pointed out how this state of affairs could come into being when he noted that “the nowadays common view that modern weapons have for the future made street-risings impossible is probably wrong. Modern weapons have to be used by police or soldiers, who may still be subverted, even in the atomic age” (Brinton 1965, 88).

Other scholars have made similar findings. In her quantitative analysis of attempts at revolution, Diana Russell concluded that a high degree of disloyalty within the armed forces toward the regime it was supposed to protect was strongly correlated with successful revolution (Russell 1974). Barrington Moore also noted the importance of the loyalty of the armed forces in determining the outcome of revolution (Moore 1978, 82-3). In his masterful *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*, Timothy Wickham-Crowley argued that the loyalty of the armed forces to the government was usually a more important determinant of the outcomes of revolution than was external assistance either to the regime or to the rebels: “Loyalty to the government is the most critical qualitative characteristic of armed forces, for the outcomes of rebellions and revolutionary wars hinge on that loyalty” (Wickham-Crowley 1992, 64).

If this observation is true for revolution (including violent revolution) in general, then it should also hold true for democratic revolution (which has tended in recent decades to be non-violent, at least on the part of the revolutionaries). Indeed, this observation appears highly likely to be true in the case of attempts at non-violent democratic revolution. For if armed forces which are loyal to the regime can almost always defeat violent, non-democratic revolutionaries, then clearly the task of defeating non-violent, democratic revolutionaries is far simpler. Indeed, non-violent, democratic revolutionaries can only succeed at toppling an authoritarian regime when the latter’s armed forces demonstrate their disloyalty by failing to defend it.

How, though, does such a situation arise? Officers are appointed to command positions because, among other criteria, they are believed to be loyal to the regime. Nor do authoritarian regimes usually allow officers to remain in such positions if there is any doubt on this score. Thus, the disloyalty of the military to the regime, which is necessary for democratic revolutionaries to be successful, must manifest itself suddenly and surprisingly at the moment the regime seeks to employ it to crush the democratic opposition.

Such sudden disloyalty, of course, does not usually manifest itself throughout the entire military establishment simultaneously. What happens instead, as the three case studies of successful democratic revolution will show, is the following sequence of events: Just at the point when the regime orders the violent suppression of its democratic opposition, one or more key units defect to the rebels, declaring that they will fight to protect them. This presents the military leadership with a serious problem: unlike before this defection, the defeat of the democratic opposition will now involve fighting against other armed soldiers and the risk of civil war. Some officers declare that they will not do this; others declare their “neutrality,”—i.e., their unwillingness to fight fellow soldiers. Even those officers willing to suppress the democratic opposition even if this means conflict within the military come to realize that they cannot count on their fellow soldiers to support them. The hard-liners yield, the regime falls, and the democrats take over the government—but civil war is avoided and the military leadership remains largely (if not entirely) intact. What occurs in these instances, then, is not mass conversion to democracy on the part of the military leadership, but a partial conversion of a part of it which serves to immobilize the rest.

Where this sequence of events has not occurred, democratic revolutions have failed. It may be that this sequence is never even initiated. If no elements of the armed forces defect to the democratic opposition, then suppressing it is not a problem for the military since this task does not pose a threat to the unity of the armed forces. Even if this sequence is initiated, though, it can be also be curtailed. It may be, for example, that some units may prove unwilling to suppress the democratic opposition, but they do not defect to and protect it. When military units willing to suppress the democratic opposition are found, their doing so does not threaten the unity of the armed forces.

### **Successful Democratic Revolutions**

**The Philippines.** Although initially elected to office, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1971. For the next decade and a half, Marcos ruled the country via the military. By the mid-1980s, the Philippines was suffering from severe economic problems as well as both Marxist and Islamist insurgencies. Marcos had also lost support within the Philippine middle class and Catholic Church.

The Filipino military was not only the instrument of Marcos’s rule, but also one of its principal beneficiaries. Nevertheless, grievances arose among Filipino army officers over the politicization of promotion. Half the Filipino army officer corps came from the elite Philippine Military Academy while the other half came from Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs. In making appointments to senior positions, Marcos favored the latter, and thus alienated the former (Clines 1986; Parsa 2000, 274).

At about the same time as Corazon Aquino’s “People’s Power” democratic movement was becoming strong in the mid-1980s, a reformist movement also arose within the armed forces (RAM, or Reform the Armed Forces Movement), which drew its support primarily from disgruntled Philippine Military Academy graduates. This group had planned a coup, but called it off just before the “special election” of January 1986 in which Marcos ran against Aquino for president. Although Marcos thought he would win, Aquino did instead. It was at this point that some RAM officers defected to the Aquino camp. By itself, this defection may not have been enough to immobilize the rest of the armed forces. However, the defections to Aquino of the highly popular General Ramos,

along with Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile (who apparently feared imminent arrest) did have this effect (Mydans 1986a; Mydans 1986b; Parsa 2000, 274-5).

Soldiers supporting Aquino gathered at two adjacent points in Manila. Over the course of a weekend in late February 1986, their numbers grew from 300 to 500. Marcos' loyal supporter, General Ver, sent troops to suppress the rebellion, but these proved unwilling to fire on the crowds that came out in favor of the rebels. This had an electric effect: "By Monday night, most members of the armed forces had switched sides to join the rebels, and Ramos claimed that 90 percent of the country's 250,000 military troops were now under his control" (Parsa 2000, 275). The U.S. government facilitated Marcos' departure from Manila to exile in Hawaii. This step only occurred, though, after Marcos had completely lost control over his own armed forces.

It is not clear that the 1986 democratic revolution in the Philippines would have succeeded if there had not been resentment within the officer corps about Marcos favoring his cronies over professional officers for senior leadership positions, if defense minister Enrile had not feared that Marcos was about to arrest him, if Ramos and Enrile had not defected to the Aquino camp, and finally, if General Ver's troops had been willing to fire on those soldiers who had initially sided with her. All of these things, though, did happen, and the democratic revolution was greatly facilitated as a result.

**Russia.** The last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, had launched an economic and political reform program in the late 1980's which he and his supporters believed would reverse the USSR's decline. By 1991, though, it was clear not only that Gorbachev's reforms were not working as he had intended, but also that they had unleashed forces which he was unable to control. In addition to increased demands for democratization, Gorbachev's reform effort resulted in the strong rise of independence movements in many of the USSR's non-Russian "union republics." In March 1991, Soviet voters approved a referendum calling for a new union treaty which would transfer many of Moscow's powers to the union republics. Wishing to forestall the breakup of the USSR, Gorbachev negotiated such a treaty with nine of the republics (the others wanted outright independence) and was scheduled to sign this at the end of August after his return to Moscow from his Crimean vacation. It was to forestall this devolution of power that on August 18 the self-appointed State Committee for the State of the Emergency in the USSR seized power and imposed martial law (Odom 1998, 310-13).

Since this committee included the defense minister, the interior minister, and the chairman of the KGB, it appeared to control all of the USSR's armed forces. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, by contrast, did not command any armed forces. He did, though, have a few military advisers, including Colonel General Konstantin Kobets (a deputy chief of the General Staff who assisted Yeltsin throughout the crisis) and Colonel V.A. Burkov (who would serve as a crucial link during the crisis between Yeltsin and the commander of the Soviet air force). Earlier that year, Yeltsin had established friendly contacts with a number of high-level officers, including Lt. General Pavel Grachev, commander of the airborne forces. As William E. Odom observed, "Before the August crisis Yeltsin sought and won more support within the military than is generally realized" (Odom 1998, 340).

Despite this, the Emergency Committee believed that it enjoyed the loyalty of the armed forces at the outset of the crisis (it would probably not have come into being otherwise). Having detained Gorbachev in the Crimea, it sent KGB troops to seize

Yeltsin at his dacha outside Moscow. But while these troops could have done this easily, they did not. Nor did they prevent Yeltsin and his retinue from traveling to the Russian White House—the building where the Russian parliament was housed (Pearson 2003)..

Large crowds soon gathered around the White House in order to protect Yeltsin and the Russian parliamentarians. Troop defections to Yeltsin were also reported, including three tanks, 20 paratroopers, thirty armored vehicles, and seven ammunition trucks, all in the vicinity of the White House, on August 19 (Clines 1991). More defections of “individual servicemen and some entire units” were reported the next day (Keller 1991). Early on in the crisis, it became known that the commander of the Soviet air force, Marshal Shaposhnikov, refused to allow his aircraft to be used for transporting troops to the capital (Odom 1998, 321-9).

Even then, the Emergency Committee still could have crushed Yeltsin and his supporters with the troops available to them in Moscow. However, General Grachev—along with one of his deputies, General Alexander Lebed—undertook a series of ambiguous actions which raised uncertainty about whether troops under their command were siding with Yeltsin or with the Emergency Committee. In truth, they appeared to be positioning themselves to retain favor with whoever proved to be the winner. Their actions, though, helped create enough uncertainty about whether some units might defend Yeltsin so that other officers who were present in Moscow were unwilling to initiate the use of force. As Odom observed, “The careerism and hypocrisy instilled...in the past now paralyzed most of them. Rather than act to save the system, they waited and watched, seeking to join the winning side” (Odom 1998, 345). Realizing that this was the case while also refusing to punish or relieve those of his subordinates who were more overtly siding with Yeltsin, the defense minister, Marshal Yazov, ordered his troops to withdraw from Moscow (Odom 1998, 336-7). The coup quickly fizzled afterwards.

Had the KGB arrested Yeltsin at his dacha on the morning of August 19, had Marshal Shaposhnikov simply followed orders, had Marshal Yazov acted quickly to replace officers whom he knew or suspected were not obeying his commands, or had even one senior-level unit commander in Moscow vigorously attacked the Russian White House, Russia’s democratic revolution (such as it was) may not have occurred.

**Serbia.** A similar series of events culminated in Serbia’s democratic revolution of October 2000. Between 1987 and 2000, the reign of Serbian nationalist strongman Slobodan Milosevic had witnessed the breakup of Yugoslavia; disastrous wars over Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo (all of which the Serbs lost); and both the impoverishment and isolation of Serbia. He had managed to retain power through all this thanks to a core constituency (mainly in the rural areas) which supported his ultra-nationalism, manipulation of elections, divisions among his opponents, and, of course, the loyalty of the military and police forces (Gordy 2000).

Apparently believing that he and his supporters could win, Milosevic scheduled both presidential and legislative elections for late September 2000. This time, however, the opposition united behind a single candidate—the nationalist democrat Vojislav Kostunica. In the elections held September 24, it was widely believed that Kostunica had won an outright majority, and was thus entitled to become president. Milosevic, though, claimed that this was not the case, and that he and Kostunica would have to face each other in a run-off election. Large-scale strikes and demonstrations soon broke out, including in the capital, Belgrade. But the commander of the Serbian Army, General

Nebojsa Pavkovic, expressed his willingness to use force against the opposition (RFE/RL 2000; Erlanger and Cohen, 2000).

On October 5, a half million opponents of the regime amassed in Belgrade. In addition, key elements of the police defected to the democratic opposition. While this initial defection was extremely small, it had a rapidly cascading effect. According to Velimir Ilic, the mayor of Cacak, “two officers who were members of an elite police unit in Belgrade and two more in Cacak had helped to coordinate a mass defection of the police as the crowd, spearheaded by off-duty army paratroopers, rushed the Parliament building” (Gall 2000). After awhile, those police forces acting to defend the Milosevic regime simply stopped doing so. The crucial moment came that afternoon when General Pavkovic “concluded that an order to fire would not be obeyed by his troops” (Erlanger and Cohen 2000). Without the protection of the security forces, which had appeared to back him fully right up to the end, Milosevic soon agreed to surrender power to Kostunica.

In retrospect, it was clear that the bulk of the armed forces was just as eager as the majority of Serbs to get rid of Milosevic. When just a few took the initiative to back the democrats, the rest of the police and army either very quickly joined them or refused to oppose them.

### **Unsuccessful Democratic Revolutions**

**China.** Fueled by the growing strength of democratic forces in Eastern Europe and the reform program launched by Gorbachev in the USSR, a democratic revolutionary movement arose in China in early 1989. Demonstrations, primarily by students, broke out in several Chinese cities in mid-April. In Beijing, a crowd of over 100,000 protesters gathered in Tiananmen Square. Determined to nip this movement in the bud, the communist authorities declared martial law on May 20. The protesters, however, did not disperse. More ominously for the regime, the soldiers stationed in and around the capital did not enforce martial law: “The head of the 38<sup>th</sup> Army is said to have refused to march on Beijing, and the Beijing Garrison Command is also widely believed to have been unwilling to carry out martial law” (Kristof 1989a).

The People’s Liberation Army, it turned out, was divided. These divisions, however, were not along pro-democratic vs. anti-democratic lines, but instead reflected loyalties to rival leaders within the Communist party hierarchy. Thus, while the units stationed in and around Beijing did not enforce martial law, they did not defect to the democratic opposition either. Seeing this, the hard line party leadership ordered units loyal to it stationed in more distant areas to be brought into the capital. It was these units—especially the 27<sup>th</sup> Army—which attacked the student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on the night of June 3-4 (Kristof 1989b). It was initially reported that a “standoff” developed between the pro-hard-line 27<sup>th</sup> Army and the pro-reform 38<sup>th</sup> Army. Serious fighting between these different units, though, did not develop. Instead, “While some units refused to use force, in the end they did not oppose those who did” (Trainor 1989).

We will never know whether democratic revolution would have succeeded in China if the 38<sup>th</sup> Army had actually come out in defense of the demonstrators instead of merely refraining to crack down on them. It appears in retrospect, though, that something like this happening would have been necessary to change the dynamics of the situation.

This would have been a very risky move for the commander of the 38<sup>th</sup> Army to undertake. If he had taken it, though, the commander of the 27<sup>th</sup> Army not only would have had to fight against unarmed students in Tiananmen Square, but against armed fellow soldiers as well. Maybe he would have done this, but a safer course of action under these circumstances might have been to do nothing. But because the 27<sup>th</sup> Army struck first, it imposed on the 38<sup>th</sup> the choice between fighting fellow soldiers or the safer course of doing nothing which the 38<sup>th</sup> opted for.

**Burma/Myanmar.** The attempt at democratic revolution in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) proceeded episodically from September 1987 through July 1990, with a few fits and starts thereafter. That the potential for a democratic revolution existed was demonstrated by the gathering of over half a million people to hear a speech by Aung San Suu Kyi (who would become the leader of the National League for Democracy) on August 26, 1988, and even more, by the NLD winning 392 out of 485 seats (and over 80% of the vote) in the National Assembly elections of May 27, 1990, even though Suu Kyi was under house arrest (Thompson 1999, 34-7). The overwhelming majority of Burmese clearly expressed a preference for the military regime to give way to democracy.

Throughout this period, however, the military demonstrated that it was ready and willing to use force against the democratic opposition. It is believed to have killed thousands of people in September 1988. The military regime annulled the results of the May 1990 election two months later without much protest: the citizenry by then understood what would happen to those who expressed opposition to military rule (“Phooey to 80%” 1990).

What allowed the military to suppress the desire for democracy expressed by the overwhelming majority of society was the fact that it remained united. As Nick Thompson observed, “In Burma, almost none of the low-ranking officers had changed sides. If a few had, the outcome would surely have been much different” (Thompson 1999, 42). There were times, though, during the 1987-90 crisis when this seemed possible. For example, Bertil Lintner—one of the closest observers of Burmese affairs—wrote the following at the time of the September 1988 crackdown: “According to Burmese sources, most soldiers and officers up to the rank of colonel privately sympathize with the demonstrators. The coup may now force these frictions to the surface, resulting in a split within the army” (Lintner 1988). Elsewhere Lintner reported that the Burmese student demonstrators, and public at-large, believed that average soldiers would not fire upon them (quoted in Thompson 1999, 45-6, 52n59). Lintner’s sources were clearly over-optimistic.

There appears to have been only one military defection of note to the democratic camp: Brigadier General Tin Oo, “a former armed forces staff chief and a top official of Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy” (Richburg 1989). General Tin Oo, however, was placed under house arrest in July 1989 (at the same time as Aung San Suu Kyi was) and later sentenced to three years at hard labor (“Burma Seizes Six Opponents” 1990). This action was clearly aimed at preventing emulation of the general’s defection to the democratic camp by other officers as well as a warning to them about the consequences of doing so.

What the Burmese case demonstrates is that a democratic revolution cannot occur even when an overwhelming majority in society wants it if the key military defections to

the democratic camp which leads to the immobilization of the armed forces as a whole do not occur.

**Algeria.** Whether or not Algeria was experiencing a democratic revolution in 1988-92 is still a matter of debate. Indeed, Algeria's military leaders claimed that they were crushing an Islamic revolution. There is no doubt, however, that Algeria was on the verge of an electoral revolution.

It began in October 1988 when large-scale riots broke out in the capital protesting the one-party rule of the secular National Liberation Front (known by its French initials: FLN), in conjunction with the armed forces, ever since Algeria's independence in 1962. Although these riots were put down quickly and brutally by the army, President Bendjedid (a former senior military commander) announced that Algeria would embark upon the path of democratization. In February 1989, a "constitutional revision" was approved which ended the FLN's status as the sole legal political party and allowed for the formation of others, all of which could compete in free elections. Dozens of new parties came into being, including the Islamic Salvation Front (also known by its French initials: FIS) (Mortimer 1991, 575-83).

Elections were first held for local governments in June 1990. Considering the multiplicity of parties competing, the results were stunning: the FIS won 54% of the vote while the FLN garnered only 28%. The FIS thus gained control of about 850 out of approximately 1,500 municipalities, as well as two-thirds of the provincial assemblies (Mortimer 1991, 584). Many expressed the fear that if the FIS went on to win the national elections, it would create an Islamic fundamentalist regime.

Seeking to prevent an outright FIS victory in the upcoming parliamentary elections, a law was passed by the outgoing FLN-dominated parliament expanding the number of electoral districts in rural areas where the FLN was believed to be strong. Other parties objected to this, and the FIS organized demonstrations. The army responded in June 1991 with a massive crackdown in which thousands of FIS supporters were arrested, including its two top leaders. A state of siege was also declared, but this was lifted in September 1991. Parliamentary elections were set for December 26, with run-offs set for January 16 for the top two candidates in districts where no candidate received an outright majority in the first round (Entelis and Arone 1992, 29-33).

With a certain degree of dissatisfaction over FIS rule in some localities evident and after passing another gerrymandering law meant to favor the FLN in October, the government seemed hopeful about the FLN's electoral prospects. Once again, though, the results were stunning: the FIS won 188 out of 430 seats outright, compared to only 16 for the FLN. It appeared that the FIS was headed for a big win in the run-offs, but before these could take place, the army ousted President Bendjedid and nullified the first-round election results (Ibrahim 1992; Entelis and Arone 1992, 33-4). Soon thereafter, Algeria would descend into a bloody civil war between the military and an increasingly radicalized Islamic opposition that would go on for years.

According to Robert Mortimer, "The [Algerian] military is a cohesive institution that has been extremely sensitive to the need to maintain its internal unity....The high command consequently viewed the rise of a strong Islamist movement as a potential threat to the integrity of the army as an autonomous secular organization" (Mortimer 1996, 20). The Algerian army leadership was willing to accept the downfall of the discredited FLN and the rise of democracy—provided that Islamic parties received no



more than a third of the vote. Apparently believing that this would be the case in the December 1991 parliamentary elections even after the strong showing by the FIS in the June 1990 local government races, the military was simply not prepared to accept the prospect of it holding a majority in parliament. The decision to halt the democratization process was reportedly agreed to unanimously by the top leadership of the Algerian army, and supported by lower ranking officers who “were part of the secular and modernist middle class that was extremely uneasy about the prospect of an outright Islamist takeover of the government” (Mortimer 1996, 22). Under these circumstances, there was simply no prospect of a significant military defection to the side of the demonstrably popular opposition that could have immobilized the rest of the armed forces as in the cases of successful democratic revolution.

## **Conclusion**

These six cases illustrate how the absence of military defection can thwart even a widely popular democratic revolutionary movement, while small but key military defections can serve to prevent the armed forces from suppressing a democratic revolutionary movement. It would appear, then, if only a small number of officers would take the initiative to defect with their soldiers to the opposition, the prospects for successful democratic revolution are bright. But while the three cases of successful democratic revolution examined here have shown how just a few military defections to the democratic opposition can have a cascading and/or immobilizing effect, somebody contemplating such a move in a situation where nobody else has yet made it cannot be assured that his defection will have either of these effects. And if it doesn't, the costs to the individual are likely to be either death or imprisonment (as in the case of General Tin Oo in Burma). It is only prudent, then, for those in the military who want a democratic revolution to wait for someone else to defect first. If this move has a cascading or immobilizing effect, then they can defect safely later. But if nobody is willing to take the risk of being the first to defect, then the authoritarian regime's use of force against the democratic revolutionaries will not be opposed from within the military, and hence, is highly likely to be successful.

But as the successful cases of democratic revolution show, there are those who have been willing to take the risk that defecting to the opposition entails. Prior contact with the democratic opposition appears to have played a role in the case of some officers who took this step. There appears, however, to have been no such contact in the case of others who did so: their decision to defect to the democratic opposition came as a total surprise—perhaps even to themselves when forced to react to an order to fire upon the democratic opposition. No matter how it is made, the decision to become a “first defector” can clearly lead to the rapid downfall of an authoritarian regime.

As a result of just a few key military defections, a democratic revolution can occur even if the bulk of the armed forces do not undergo a democratic conversion. Continued hostility toward democratization, though, can have negative long-term implications. In the summer of 2003, the Philippines experienced yet another in a string of attempted military coups that have taken place ever since the “people power” revolution of 1986. More ominously, the Russian military has done nothing to prevent their country's slide back toward authoritarianism that has taken place under President Putin.

On the other hand, the absence of the key military defections which allows for the suppression of a democratic revolution at one point in time does not preclude democratic revolution from ever happening. Indeed, the democratic revolutions in the three countries discussed here, as well as others, were preceded by many years of repression in them. Authoritarian rulers who have suppressed democratic revolutions appear to be very much aware of this. The fact that the Burmese generals once again seized Aung San Suu Kyi in 2003 shows that they believe that they still have reason to fear her.

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